

Happy anniversary!

White Sands Space Harbor celebrates 25 years of service

By Cheerie R. Patneau

Pink-tinged mountains and cool predawn air greeted visitors to the remote White Sands Space Harbor (WSSH). After dawn, the sun picked out tiny sparkling gypsum crystals in the white sand, and highlighted the large, colorful hot-air balloons that puffed up and hovered overhead.

The visitors gathered at the space harbor to celebrate 25 years of site support to the Space Shuttle Program. The beautiful setting is ideal for Space Shuttle pilot-landing training, as well as supporting the program as the backup landing site for Kennedy Space Center.

The WSSH is located on the Army's White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) on the outskirts of White Sands National Monument. It is used day and night by Shuttle pilots practicing approaches and landings in the Shuttle Training Aircraft (STA). The STA is the pilot's realistic simulation of the Shuttle's flight characteristics and its instrumentation. A landing is practiced from an altitude of 28,000 feet or higher through touchdown.

Robert Mitchell, NASA WSSH Manager, welcomed friends, family and visitors to the anniversary celebration,

which took place in a large tent. He identified the site's three large runways, one of which the STA would land on around 9:30 a.m. to let Mission Specialist Steven Swanson off before completing several sorties for the audience.

Mitchell thanked the WSSH employees and praised them as being "always ready" to support a landing of the Space Shuttle or a training session with the astronauts.

Mitchell also thanked the people who had worked to plan the event:

- WSMR community workers
- Debbie McMurtry, leader of the Holloman Air Force Base convoy
- White Sands Test Facility management
- Terry Drake of the Alamogordo Balloon Association
- Frank Offutt, Honeywell Technology Solutions, Inc., Supervisor
- Debbie Bingaman and Monti Marlin of the WSMR Public Affairs Office

Mitchell introduced Brigadier General Steven Flohr, WSMR commanding general, who welcomed the event attendees. Alex Paczynski, the founder of the site and a recent inductee into the WSMR Hall of Fame, was then introduced and spoke briefly.

Paczynski detailed the background of the site's history by stating, "When NASA determined a need for a Space Shuttle practice landing area, I talked with Alan Manson, who worked with me. When I contacted Holloman Air Force Base 25 years ago, they said they were too 'busy' to help us establish a landing area.

"So, I took Alan out and showed him Northrup Strip. He said I showed him 'nothing,' as it was a real old runway, just a remnant. But he was impressed enough

to help us by taking the idea to George Abbey. We established WSSH on a shoe-string budget."

Scott Bernal, an Airfield Maintenance Technician at WSSH (HTSI), said working on the site is "unique and amazing. I like the diversity of the work and the cross-training," he said.

He added: "I'm proud to do my part with the rest of our team and keep the runways free of debris for safe Shuttle landing and training."



Robert Baker (left), Program Manager for Honeywell Technology Solutions Inc., and Robert Mitchell, NASA White Sands Space Harbor, welcome Mission Specialist Steven Swanson to the White Sands Space Harbor.

NASA's Benefits of Space Trailer visits New Mexico

by Cheerie R. Patneau

School children, families, teachers, parents and tourists all walked through NASA's Benefits of Space Trailer during its sojourn in southern New Mexico recently, where they learned of NASA-developed technology that benefits all of us.

The semi-truck van is divided into two parts: An exhibit hall and a 30-seat, big-screen theater. The exhibit hall boasts a moon rock, while the theater screen is

home to a Disney®-animated movie. Of special note, the medical technology spotlighted in the exhibit included a tiny pacemaker with bi-directional telemetry tracked and reprogrammed by satellite, infrared and magnetic resonance imagery (MRI), and liquid crystal screen (LCD) technology, all of which have played a part in our daily lives.

The movie recapped rocket-planet exploration history and heralds the probability of a long-term journey to Mars. Both exhibits have been recently

"refurbished and improved," said Connie Sartor, who served as a tour guide with Bobby Duncan.

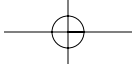
In the 19-minute tour of space lore, they showed visitors the exhibits, started the theater's movie and answer a myriad of questions. Guests were suitably impressed with the high-technology exhibits and the "star-spangled sky" black ceilings.

Volunteers from the WSTF helped out as tour guides in Alamogordo at the New Mexico Museum of Space History.

The volunteers were: Ray Gruben, Cheerie Patneau, Mario Enriquez, Steve Van Vliet (White Sands Space Harbor) and Pleddie Baker.

At the Southern New Mexico State Fair in Las Cruces, volunteers were Don Hall, Shelly Evans, Lindy Ford, Bryan Merrell, Gail Marlatt, Richard Von Wolff (with his daughter Alex and son Nick), Donald and Violet Henderson, Mike Padilla, Sal Placencia, Rosemary Perez, Mike and Barbara Barrett, Alton and Jeanne Luper and Pleddie and Karen Baker.





NEWS FROM WHITE SANDS

Happy anniversary!

■

■